

THIRD EDITION, GREATLY ENLARGED.

EXPLOITS,
CURIOUS ANECDOTES, AND SKETCHES
OF THE MOST REMARKABLE
SCOTTISH GYPSIES,
OR
TINKLERS.

*Together with Traits of Their Origin, Character,
And Manners.*

"THEY'RE queer devils, as my auld father used to say—
they're warst where they're warst guided—there's baith gude
and ill about the gypsies."—— *Guy Mannering.*

—
RONALD C. HODGES
GALASHIELS

1983

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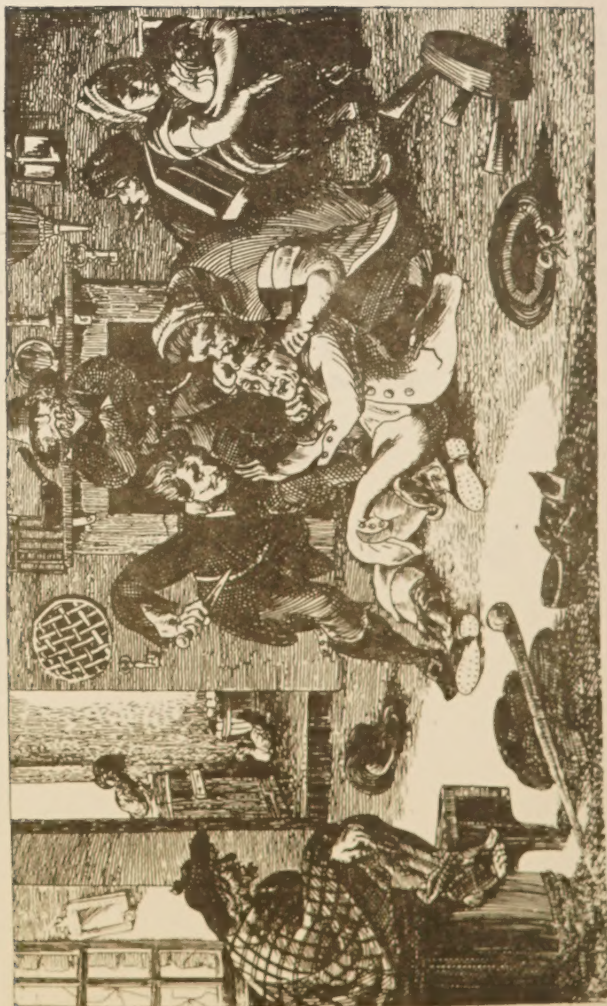
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THE PLAY AT LAIRIES DEN.
Strike him, he's a Strike him!

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INTRODUCTION.

THE Gypsies made their first appearance in Europe about the beginning of the 15th century. They entered Bohemia and Hungary from the east, travelling in numerous hordes, under leaders who assumed the titles of **KINGS, DUKES, COUNTS, or LORDS of LESSER EGYPT**, and gave themselves out for *Christian Pilgrims*, who had been expelled from that country by the Saracens for their adherence to the true religion. However doubtful may now appear their claims to this sacred character, they had the address to pass themselves upon some of the principal sovereigns of Europe, and even on the Pope himself, for real pilgrims; and obtained under the seals of these potentates, various priviledges and passports, empowering them to travel through all Christian countries for the space of seven years.—Having once gained this footing, however, the Egyptian pilgrims were at no great loss in prolonging their stay; and though it was soon discovered that their manners and conduct corresponded but little to the sanctity of their first pretensions, yet so strong was the delusion respecting them, and so dexterous were they in the arts of imposition, that they seem to have been legally protected or silently endured by most of the European governments for the greater part of a century. When their true character became at length fully understood, and they were found to be in reality a race of profligate and thievish impostors,—who from their numbers and audacity had now become a grievous and intolerable nuisance to the various countries that they had inundated,—severe measures were adopted by different states to expel them from their territories. Decrees of expulsion were issued against them by Spain in 1492, by the German empire in 1500, by France in 1561 and 1612, and England took the alarm much earlier; however, they always returned as soon as the storm had passed over. It was about the beginning of the 16th century that they appeared in Scotland, and at first seem to have enjoyed some share of indulgence.

“It is well known” says the author of *Guy Mannering*, at the 98th page of the first volume of that inimitable work, “that the gypsies were, at an early period, acknowledged as a separate and independent race by one of the Scottish monarchs, (James V.) and that they were less favourably distinguished by a subsequent law, which rendered the character of gypsey equal, in the judicial

balance, to that of common and habitual thievery, and proceeded his punishment accordingly. Notwithstanding the severity of this and other statutes, the fraternity prospered amid the distresses of the country, and received large accessions from among those whom famine, oppression, or the sword of war, had deprived of the ordinary means of subsistence. They lost in a great measure, by this intermixture, the national character of Egyptians, and became a mingled race, having all the idleness and predatory habits of their eastern ancestors, with a ferocity which they probably borrowed from the men of the north who joined their society. They travelled in different bands, and had rules among themselves, by which each tribe was confined to its own district. The slightest invasion of the precincts which had been assigned to another tribe produced desperate skirmishes, in which there was often much blood shed.

* * * * * Some rude handicrafts were entirely resigned to these itinerants, particularly the art of trencher-making, of manufacturing horn-spoons, and the whole mystery of the tinker. To these they added a petty trade in the coarse sorts of earthen-ware. Such were their ostensible means of livelihood. Each tribe had usually some fixed place of rendezvous, which they occasionally occupied and considered as their standing camp, and in the vicinity of which they generally abstained from depredation. They had even talents and accomplishments, which made them occasionally useful and entertaining. Many cultivated music with success, and the favourite fiddler or piper of a district was often to be found in a gypsy town. They understood all out-of-door sports, especially otter-hunting, fishing, or finding game. In winter, the women told fortunes, the men shewed tricks of legerdemain; and these accomplishments often helped away a weary or stormy evening in the circle of the "farmer's ha'." The wildness of their character, and the indomitable pride with which they despised all regular ha'ison, commanded a certain awe, which was not diminished by the consideration, that these strollers were a vindictive race, and were restrained by no check, either of fear or conscience, from taking desperate vengeance upon those who had offended them. These tribes were, in short, the *Pariahs* of Scotland, living like wild Indians among European settlers, and, like them, judged of rather by their own customs, habits and opinions, than as if they had been members of the civilized part of the community. Some herds of them yet remain, chiefly in such situations as afford a ready escape either into a waste country, or into another jurisdiction; not are the features of their character much softened. Their numbers, however, are so greatly diminished, that, instead of one hundred thousand, as calculated by the patriotic Fletcher, (about a century ago) it would now perhaps be impossible to collect above five hundred throughout all Scotland."

ANECDOTES
OF
SCOTTISH GYPSIES.

Roxburgh-shire Gypsies.

Anecdotes of Jean Gordon—Anecdote of the “Earl of Hell.”
Anecdote of Gleid-neckit Will—Anecdote of Tam
Gordon, Captain of the Spittal Band.

IN former times this county, from its proximity to the Borders, was so dreadfully harassed by numerous tribes of gypsies of the name of Faa, Gordon, &c. that some uncultivated tracts of country, called the Debateable lands, were completely abandoned to their use. Finally, however, they were of a more peaceable nature and dispersed themselves over the adjoining counties. The first worthy of remark among them is that singular heroine, Jean Gordon.

It is impossible to specify the exact date of the nativity of Jean Gordon; but it probably was about the year 1670. She was born at Kirk-Yetholm, a village in Roxburgh-shire, the metropolis of the Scottish Gypsies, and was married to one of their chiefs named Patrick Faa, by whom she had ten or twelve children.

About the year 1714, one of Jean's sons named Alexander Faa, was murdered by another gypsey named Robert Johnston, he escaped justice for nearly ten years, but was then taken and indicted at the instance of his Majesty's Advocate, and Marjory Young, relict of the deceased Alexander Faa, hecklemaker in Home, for the murder of the said Faa. In the evidence brought forward on the trial, we find the following curious account of this savage transaction.

" John Henderson, feuar in Huntley wood, depones, that time and place libelled, Robert Johnston, pannel, and his father, came to Huntley-wood and possessed themselves of a cot-house belonging to the deponent, and that a little after, Alex. Fall, the defunct, came up to the door of the said house, and desired they would make open the door: that the door was standing a-jar, and the deponent saw Robert Johnston, pannel, in the inside of the door, and a fork (or *grasp*) in his hand, —and saw him push over the door-head at the said Alexander Fall,—and saw the grains of the fork strike the said Alexander Fall in the breast, and coming back from the door staggering came to a midding, and there he fell down and died immediately; and depones, that the distance of the midding from the house where he received the wound is about a penny stone cast; and when the said Alexander Fall retyred from the house, he said to the rest, " Retyre for your lives, for I have gott my death: " Depones, he saw Robert Johnston, pannel, come out of the house with the fork in his hand, and pass by Alexander Fall and the deponent; heard the pannel say, he had sticket the dog, and he would stick the whelps too; whereupon the pannel run after the defunct's son with the fork in his hand, into the house of George Carter: Depones, in a little while after, saw him running down a balk and a meadow; and in two hours after, saw him on horseback riding away without his stockings or shoes, coat or hat."

Another witness swears, that—" She heard Johnston say, " Where are the whelps that I may kill them too? "—that the prisoner followed Alexander Fall's son into George Carter's house, and the deponent went thither after him; there saw the pannel, with the said fork, search beneath the bed for Alexander Falls sone, who had hidden himself beyond the cradle; and there being a cry given that Alexander Fall was dead, the pannel went away."

Johnston was sentenced to be executed on the 13th

of June 1727; but he escaped from prison. It was easier, however, to escape the grasp of Justice, than to elude the wide-spread talons of gypsy vengeance. Jean Gordon traced the murderer like a blood hound, she followed him to Holland, and from thence to Ireland, where she had him siezed and brought back to Jedburgh, where she obtained the full reward of her toils, by enjoying the gratification of seeing him hanged on the Gallow-hill. Some time afterward, Jean being up at Sourhope, a sheep farm on Bowmont Water, the goodman there said to her, "Weel, Jean, ye hae got Rob Johnston hanged at last, and out o' the way,"—"Aye, gudeman!" replied Jean, lifting up her apron by the two corners, "and a' that fu' o' gowd has na done't."—Jean's 'apron-fu' gowd,' may perhaps remind some of our readers of Meg Merrilies' pock of jewels,—indeed the whole transaction forcibly recalls the powerful picture of that stern and intrepid heroine.

It is related, that all Jean's sons were condemned to die at Jedburgh on the same day. It is said the Jury were equally divided, but that a friend to justice, who had slept during the discussion, waked suddenly and gave his vote for condemnation, in the emphatic words, "*Hang them a'.*" Jean was present, and only said, "The Lord help the innocent in a day like this!" Her own death was accompanied with circumstances of the most brutal outrage, of which she was in many respects wholly undeserving. Jean had among other demerits, or merits, that of being a staunch Jacobite. She chanced to be at Carlisle upon a fair or market day, soon after the year 1746, where she gave vent to to her political partiality, to the great offence of the rabble of that city. Being zealous in their loyalty when there was no danger, in proportion to the tameness with which they surrendered to the Highlanders in 1745, they inflicted upon poor Jean no slighter penalty than that of ducking her to death in the Eden. It was an operation of some time, for Jean was a stout

woman, and struggled hard with her murderers. She often got her head above water; and while she had voice left, continued to exclaim at such intervals, "*Charlie yet! Charlie yet!*"

About thirty years ago, the Kirk-Yetholm Gypsies had for their chief a descendant of Jean Gordon, who usually went by the nick-name of the "Earl of Hell." He had this name bestowed upon him, for his numerous and successful depredations upon the public, and his address in concealing them; to illustrate which—take the following humorous anecdote.

He was tried before the High Court of Justiciary for a theft of a large sum of money at a Dalkeith market. The proof seemed to the Judge fully sufficient, but the jury being of a different opinion, brought in the verdict, Not Proven; on which occasion, the presiding judge, when he dismissed the prisoner from the bar, informed him in his own characteristic language, "That he had rubbit shouthers wi' the gallows that morning;" and warned him not again to appear there with a similar body of proof against him, as it seemed scarcely possible he should meet with another jury who would construe it so favourably. Upon the same occasion, the prisoner's counsel, a gentleman now deceased, thought it proper also to say something to his client on the risk he had run, and the necessity of future propriety of conduct; to which the gypsey replied, to the great entertainment of all around. "That he was proven an innocent man, and that naeboddy had ony right to use siccan language to him."

The following anecdote of another leader shows the character of the gypsies on the borders.

The late Mr Leck, minister of Yetholm, happening to be riding home one evening from a visit over in Northumberland, when finding himself to be benighted for the sake of a near cut, he struck into a solitary track, or drove-road accross the fells, by a place called The Staw. In one of the derne places through which

this path led him, there stood an old deserted shepherd's house, which, of course, was reputed to be haunted. The minister, though little apt to be alarmed by such reports, was however somewhat startled, on observing as he approached close to the cottage, a 'grim visage' staring out past a window-claith, or sort of curtain, which had been fastened up to supply the place of a door,—and also several 'dusky figures' skulking among the bourtree bushes that had at one time sheltered the shepherd's garden. Without leaving him any time for speculation, however, the knight of the curtain bolted forth upon him, and siezing his horse by the bridle, demanded his money. Mr Leck, though it was now dusk, at once recognised the gruff voice and the great burly head of his next door neighbour, Gleid-neckit Will, the gypsey chief. "Dear me, William," said the minister in his usual quiet manner, "can this be you? Ye're surely no serious wi' me? Ye wadna sae far wrang your character for a good neighbour for the bit trifle I hae to gie, William?" "Lord saif us, Mr Leck!" said Will, quitting the reign, and lifting his hat with great respect, "whae wad hae thought o' meeting yow out owre here away? Ye needna gripe for ony siller to me—I wadna touch a plack o' your gear, nor a hair o' your head, for a' the growd o' Tiviotdale.—I ken ye'll no do us an ill turn for this mistak—and I'll e'en see ye safe through the eire Staw, its no reckoned a very canny bit mair ways nor ane, but I wat weel ye'll no be feared for the dead, and I'll tak care o' the living."—Will accordingly gave his reverend friend a safe convoy through the haunted pass, and, notwithstanding this ugly mistake, continued ever after an inoffensive neighbour to the minister, who on his part observed a prudent and inviolable secrecy on the subject of the rencounter during the life-time of Gleid-neckit Will."

The following story contains perhaps nothing very remarkable in itself, or characteristic of the gypsey

race; but it seems worthy of insertion from other considerations:—Tam Gordon, a relation of the aforementioned Jean Gordon, the late captain of the Spittal band of gypsies, and a very notorious and desperate character, had been in the habit of stealing sheep from the flocks of Mr Abram Logan, farmer at Lammerton, in the east of Berwickshire. Numbers having successively disappeared, Mr Logan and the shepherd sat up one night to watch for the thief; and about midnight, Tam and his son-in-law, Ananias Faa, coming for their accustomed prey, the farmer and his servant sprung up and seized them. Abram Logan, a stout active man, had grappled with the elder gypsy, while the shepherd secured the other; the ruffian instantly drew a large knife, used for killing sheep, and made repeated attempts to stab him; but being very closely grasped by the farmer, he was unable to thrust the weapon home, and it only struck against his ribs. With some difficulty the thieves were both secured. They were tried for the crime before the High Court of Justiciary,—convicted, and condemned to be hanged,—but afterwards to the great surprise and disappointment of their Berwickshire neighbours, obtained a pardon—a piece of unmerited and ill-bestowed clemency, for which it was generally understood they were indebted to the interest of a noble northern family of their own name. Tam Gordon died only a few years ago at a very advanced age.

SELKIRK-SHIRE GYPSIES.

Dreadful Murder of a Gypsy Piper at Cossarhill in Etnick.
 Tragic of a similar nature at Laurie'sden on Soutra Hill.
 Curious Anecdotes of Will of Phaup.

This county was at one time greatly celebrated for the gypsies it contained. The Faas and the Baileys were the two principal gangs which infested it. They

used to traverse the country in bodies of from twenty to thirty in number with their horses and cuddies, among whom there were many stout, handsome, and athletic men. They generally cleared the waters and burns of fish, the farmers out-houses of eggs, and the *lums* of all superfluous and moveable stuff, such as hams, *kipper*, &c., that hung there for the purpose of reisting. It was likewise well known that they never scrupled to kill a sheep occasionally, but they always managed matters so dexterously, that no one could ascertain from whom they were taken. These gypsies were otherwise civil, full of humour and merriment, and the country people did not dislike them. They fought desperately among themselves, but were seldom the aggressors in any dispute or quarrel with others. The following instance of their depravity may be depended on as authentic.

About a hundred years ago in the month of May, a gang of these gypsies came up Ettrick;—one party of them lodged at a farm house called Scobcleugh, and the rest went forward to Cossarhill, another farm about a mile farther on. Among the latter was one who played on the pipes and violin, delighting all that heard him; and the gang principally on his account, were civilly treated. Next day the two parties again joined, and proceeded westward in a body. There were about thirty souls in all, and they had about five horses. On a sloping grassy spot, on the farm of Brokhoprig, they halted to rest. Here the hapless musician quarreled with another of the tribe about a girl, sister of the latter. Weapons were instantly drawn, and the piper losing courage, or knowing that he was not a match for his antagonist, fled—the other pursuing close at his heels. For a full mile and a half they continued to strain most violently,—the one running for life, and the other thirsting for blood, until they came again to Cossarhill, the place they had left. The family had all gone out either to the sheep or the

peats, save one servant girl, who was baking bread at a kitchen table, when the piper rushed breathless into the house. She screamed, and enquired what was the matter? He answered, "Nae skaith to you—nae skaith to you—for God in heaven's sake hide me!" With that he essayed to hide himself behind a salt-barrel that stood in a corner—but his ruthless pursuer instantly entering, his panting betrayed him, the ruffian pulled him out by the hair, dragged him into the middle of the floor, and ran him through the body with his dirk. The piper never asked for mercy, but cursed the other as long as he had breath. The girl was struck motionless with horror, but the murderer told her never to heed or regard it for no ill should happen to her. By the time the breath was well out of the body of the unfortunate musician, some more of the gang arrived, bringing with them a horse, on which they carried back the body, and buried it on the spot where they had first quarreled. His grave is marked by one stone at the head and another at the foot, which the gypsies themselves placed; and it is still looked upon by the rustics as a dangerous place for a walking ghost to this day. There was no cognizance taken of the affair.

There is a similar story of later date, of a murder committed at Laurie's-den* by one gypsy on another. It happened before many witnesses. They fought for a considerable time with their fists, till at last one getting the other down, he drew his knife, and his wife assisted him in holding down his opponent till he was despatched by repeated stabs. This virago thinking

* Laurie's-den is a solitary public house of the poorest description, situated on the middle of an extensive moor at the top of Soutra hill, about twenty miles south of Edinburgh, and is the only human habitation visible on the brown outline of the far-spreading Lammermoor hills to the south. The general appearance of this *cabaret* bears a striking resemblance to the "inn" public of Bessie Maclure, which the Author of Waverley immutably describes in his tale of "Old Mortality."

that her husband was not making quick enough work, called out to him, "*Strike laigh, Rob! Strike laigh!*" When he pulled the weapon out, the blood sprung to the ceiling, where we believe it still remains; and though there were many of the gang present, none of them offered to separate the combatants, or made any observation on the issue, farther than one saying—"Gude faith ye hac done for him now, Rob!" The story bears, that the assassin immediately fled, but was pursued by Sir Walter Scott, then a very young man, and Mr Fairbairn, long afterwards Innkeeper at Blackshiels, who chanced to pass about the time this murder was committed, and being shocked at the indifference with which the bystanders seemed to regard what had passed, pursued, and with the assistance of a neighbouring blacksmith, who joined in the chase, succeeded in apprehending the murderer, whose name was Robert Keith. He was afterwards tried, condemned and hanged for the murder.

About sixty years ago, when the gypsies began to be called *Tinklers*, there lived old Will of Phaup, a well known character at the head of Ettrick, who was wont to shelter them for many years;—they asked nothing but house-room and grass for their horses, and though they sometimes remained for several days, he could have left every chest and press about the house open, with the certainty that nothing would be missing; for he said "he aye kend fu' weel that the tod wad keep his ain hole clean." But times altered sadly with honest Will—which happened as follows:—The gypsies were lodged at a place called Potburn, and the farmer either having bad grass about his house, or not choosing to have it eaten up, had made the gypsies turn their horses over the water to Phaup ground. One morning about day-break, Will found the stoutest man of the gang, Ellick Kennedy, feeding six horses on the Coomb-loan, the best piece of grass on the farm, which he was carefully *haining* for winter fod-

der. A desperate combat ensued—but there was no man a match for Will—he thrashed the tinker to his heart's content—cut the girthing and *sanks* off the horses, and hunted them out of the country. A warfare of five years duration ensued between Will and the gypsies; and they nearly ruined him. At the end of that period he was glad to make up matters with his old friends, and shelter them as formerly. He said, “he could maistly hae hauden his ain wi’ them, an it ladna been for their warlockry, but deil-be-he’s it he could keep frae their kenning—they ance fand out his purse, though he had gart Meg dabble’t into the kail-yard!”

GALLOWAY GYPSIES.

Anecdote of the elopement of Johnnie Faa and the Countess of Cassillis—Ballad of Johnnie Faa—Remarkable Anecdotes and Curious traits of the Character of Billy Marshall.

At a very early period this district was characterized as a strong-hold of the gypsies. Those of the name of Kennedy and Marshall formed the greater part of them; and it is generally believed that they adopted the former on account of the protection they might expect to derive from the powerful family of that name; for they were probably acquainted with the following rhyme:—

“Twixt Wigton and the town of Ayr,
Portpatrick and the cruives of Cree,
No man needs think for to bide there,
Unless he court with Kennedie.”

The celebrated intrigue of Johnnie Faa and the Countess of Cassillis is thus recorded by popular tradition. The Earl of Cassillis had married a certain nobleman's daughter contrary to her wishes, she having been previously engaged to another; but the persuasions and importunity of her friends at last brought her to consent. Johnnie Faa, the leader of a band of

gypsies, her former lover, siezing the opportunity of the earl's absence on a deputation to the assembly of divines at Westminster, 1643, to ratify the solemn league and covenant, carried off the lady, 'nothing loth.' The earl having returned opportunely at the time of the commission of the act, and nowise inclined to participate in his consort's ideas on the subject, collected his vassals, and pursued his lady and her paramour to the borders of England; where having overtaken them, a battle ensued, in which Faa and his followers were all killed, or taken prisoners, excepting one,

—————the meanest of them all,
Who lives to weep and sing their fall.

It is by this survivor that the popular ballad is supposed to have been written, (a correct copy of which we subjoin.) The earl, on bringing back the fair fugitive, banished her *a mensa et thoro*, and, it is said, confined her for life in a tower at the village of Maybole, in Ayrshire, built for the purpose; and that nothing might remain about this tower unappropriated to its original destination, eight heads carved in stone, below one of the turrets, are said to be the effigies of so many of the gypsies. The lady herself, as well as the survivor of Faa's followers, contributed to perpetuate the remembrance of the transaction; for if he wrote a song about it, she wrought it in tapestry; and this piece of workmanship is still preserved at Culzean Castle. It remains to be mentioned, that the ford, by which the lady and her lover crossed the river Deon is still denominated "the Gypsey steps."

JOHNNIE FAA,—A BALLAD.

THE gypsies came to my Lord Cassillis' yett,

And O! but they sang bonnie;

They sang sae sweet, and sae completo,

That down came our fair Ladie.

She came tripping down the stairs,

And all her maids before her;

As soon as they saw her weel far'd face,

They coost their glamourie owre her.

She gave to them the good wheat bread,
 And they gave her the ginger;
 But she gave them a far better thing,
 The gold ring off her finger.

"Will ye go wi' me, my hinny and my heart,
 Will ye go wi' me, my dearie,
 And I will swear, by the staff of my spear,
 That your Lord shall nae mair come near thee?"

"Gar take from me my silk manteel,
 And bring to me a plaidie,
 For I will travel the world owre,
 Along with the Gypsie Laddie.

"I could sail the seas with my Jockie Faa,
 I could sail the seas with my dearie,
 I could sail the seas with my Jockie Faa,
 And with pleasure could drown with my dearie."

They wandred high, they wandred low,
 They wandred late and early,
 Untill they came to an old tenant's barn,
 And by this time she was weary.

"Last night I lay in a weel made bed,
 And my noble Lord beside me,
 And now I must ly in an old tenants barn,
 And the black crew glowring owre me."

"O hold your tongue, my hinny and my heart,
 O hold your tongue, my dearie,
 For I will swear by the moon and the stars
 That thy Lord shall nae mair come near thee."

They wandred high, they wandred low,
 They wandred late and early,
 Untill they came to that wan water,
 And by this time she was weary.

"Aften have I rode that wan water,
 And my Lord Cassilis beside me,
 And now I must set in my white feet and wade,
 And carry the Gypsie Laddie."

By and by came home this noble Lord,
 And asking for his ladie,
 The one did cry, the other did reply,
 She is gone with the Gypsie Laddie.

"Go saddle to me the black, he says,
 The brown rides never so speedie,
 And I will neither eat nor drink,
 Till I bring home my Ladie."

He wandred high, he wandred low,
 He wandred late and early,
 Untill he came to that wan water,
 And there he spied his Ladie.

"O wilt thou go home, my hinny and my heart,
 O wilt thou go home, my dearie,
 And I will close thee in a close room
 Where no man shall come near thee?"

"I will not go home, my hinny and my heart,
 I will not come home, my dearie,
 If I have brewn good beer I will drink of the same,
 And my Lord shall nae mair come near me."

"But I will swear by the moon and the stars,
 And the sun that shines sae clearly,
 That I am as free of the gypsie gang
 As the hour my mother did bear me."

They were fifteen valiant men,
 Black, but very bonny,
 And they all lost their lives for one—
 The Earl of Cassillis' Ladie.

The celebrated Galloway gypsey, Billy Marshall, is the next character we have to mention as notorious for his exploits. He was born in or about the year 1666, and in his youth was a private soldier in the army of King William, at the battle of the Boyne. It was likewise well known that he was a private in some of the British regiments, which served under the great Duke of Marlborough in Germany, and was present at the memorable battles of Blenheim and Ramillies. But at this period, Billy's military career in the service of his country ended. He went to his commanding officer, one of the M'Guffogs of Roscoe, a very old family in Galloway, and asked him if he had any commands for his native country: Being asked if there were any opportunity, he replied, yes; he was going to Keltonhill fair, having for some years made it a rule never to be absent. His officer knowing his man, thought it needless to take any very strong measure to hinder him; and Billy Marshall was at Keltonhill fair accordingly.

Now Billy's destinies placed him in a high sphere ; it was about this period, that either electively, or by usurpation, he was placed at the head of that *mighty* people in the south west, whom he governed with equal prudence and talent for the long space of eighty or ninety years. Some of his admirers assert, that he was of *royal ancestry*, and succeeded by the laws of hereditary succession ; but no regular annals of *Billy's house* were kept ; and oral tradition and testimony weigh heavily against this assertion. From any research we have been able to make, we are strongly disposed to think, that, in this crisis of his life, Billy Marshall had been no better than either Julius Cæsar, Richard III., Oliver Cromwell, Hyder Ally, or Napoleon Bonaparte : We do not mean to say, that he waded through so much blood as some of those, to seat himself on a throne, or to grasp at a diadem and sceptre ; but it was shrewdly suspected, that Billy Marshall had stained his character and name with human blood : His predecessor died very suddenly, (it never was supposed by his own hand,) and was buried as privately about the foot of Cairnmuir, Craig Nelder, or the Carse of Slakes ; without ceremony, or perhaps more properly speaking, the benefit of a *precognition* being taken, or an *inquest held* by a coroner's jury.

After Billy had firmly seated himself on the throne of his predecessor, he made a progress over his extensive dominions, with an intention to chastise severely those neighbouring Gypsey Chiefs who had made invasions on his empire. 'Twas on a Sunday forenoon in the month of April, 1707, that he along with a part of his clan came to a solitary farm house on the borders of Dumfries and Roxburghshire, in quest of a gang of Tiviotdale gypsies, who he understood had quartered there the night before. No sooner had Billy and his train arrived, than their antagonists turned out and gave them battle. The family were all out at church except one female servant, left to look after the house.

The poor woman related, that being in the greatest apprehension for her safety, she shut the door, but no sooner had she taken this precaution than it was again suddenly forced open by one of the combatants, who rushed into the apartment, and she perceived with horror that his left hand had been struck off. Without speaking to or looking at her, he thrust the bloody stump, with desperate resolution, against the glowing bars of the grate; and having staunched the blood by actual cautery, seized a knife, used for killing sheep, which lay on a shelf, and rushed out again to join the combat.—All was over before the family returned from church, and both gangs had decamped, carrying probably their dead and wounded along with them; for the place where they fought was actually soaked with blood, and exhibited among other reliques of the fray, the amputated hand of the wretch whose desperate conduct the maid-servant had witnessed.

It is not recorded whether the Galloway or Tiviotdale gypsies came off victorious in this battle; but it is more than probable that Billy, from his military experience in the field, and the well known superiority of his troops, succeeded in expelling the enemy from his country.

Billy's long reign, if not *glorious*, was in the main fortunate for his people: Only one great calamity befel him and them during that long space of time in which he held the reigns of government. It may have been already suspected, that with Billy Marshall, ambition was a ruling passion; and this bane of human fortune had stimulated in him a desire to extend his dominions, from the Brigg-end of Dumfries to the Newton of Ayr, at a time when, he well knew, the Braes of Glen Nap and the Water of Doon, to be his western precinct: He reached the Newton of Ayr, but there he was opposed, and compelled to re-cross the river, by a powerful body of *tinklers* from Dumbarton: He said, in his *bulletines*, that they were

supported by strong bodies of Irish sailors and Kyle colliers : Billy had no *artillery*, but his *cavalry* and *infantry* suffered very severely. He was obliged to leave a great part of his *baggage*, *provisions* and *camp equipage*, behind him ; consisting of kettles, pots, pans, blankets, crockery, horn, pigs, poultry, &c. A large proportion of shelties, asses, and mules were drowned ; which occasioned a *heavy* loss, in creels, panniers, hampers, tinker's tools, and cooking utensils ; and although he was well appointed as to a *medical staff*, as such expeditions usually were, in addition to those missing, many died of their wounds : However, on reaching Maybole with his broken and dispirited troops, he was joined by a faithful ally from the county of Down ; who unlike *other allies* on such occasions, did not forsake him in his adversity. This junction enabled our hero to rally, and pursue in his turn : A pitched battle was again fought somewhere about the Brigg of Doon or Alloway Kirk, when both sides as is *usual*, claimed a victory ; but, however this may have been, it is believed that this disaster, which happened A. D. 1712, had slaked the thirst of Billy's ambition : He was many years in recovering this great *political* error ; indeed, it had nearly proved as fatal to the fortunes of Billy Marshall, as the ever memorable Russian Campaign did to Napoleon Bonaparte, about the same year in the succeeding century.

Biliy died somewhere in Dumfries-shire about the year 1790, aged one hundred and twenty four years, by his own confession he was above a hundred and twenty, which was never disputed : His character may be summed up in a few words :—He had from nature a strong mind, with a vigorous and active person, and that either naturally or by acquirement, he possessed every *mental* and *personal* quality, which was requisite for one who was placed in his *high station*, and who held sovereign power over his *fellow creatures* for such a length of time ; but it is believed that from expec-

ency, not from choice) with the exception of intemperate drinking, treachery and ingratitude, he practised every crime which is incident to human nature,—those of the deepest dye, we are afraid, cannot with truth be included in the exception: In short, his people met with an irreparable loss in their king and leader; but it never was alleged, that the moral world sustained any loss by the death of the man.

LANARKSHIRE GYPSIES.

OF the gypsies of this county, we are unable to say much. From what we have seen and heard of them, they seem in general to have been of the very lowest cast. One of their chieftainesses named Mary Yeouston, is still remembered by the natives as having been a notorious

“—————ragle carlin,
Wha kent fu' weel to cleek the sterlin' ; ”

But the anecdotes related of her and others of her gang, having nothing so very singular in them as to deserve a place here, we pass on to characters of a more *exalted* and interesting nature.

MIDLOTHIAN AND PEEBLES-SHIRE GYPSIES.

Daring attempt of the gypsies on Pennycuik House—Dreadful
Gypsy battle at Romanno—Pate Bailley—Curious
Anecdote of Will Ravens, &c.

These two counties may be said to have been at one time the peculiar empire of the clans Bailley, Wilson, and Brown. From their cities of refuge, Middleton and the Temple, two villages, some ten or twelve miles south of Edinburgh, they issued over the adjacent districts, in small bands, and sadly annoyed the country

folks with their mischievous depredations. A gang of them, more daring than the rest, once broke into the House of Pennycuik, while the greater part of the family were at church. Sir John Clarke, the proprietor, barricadoed himself in his own apartment where he sustained a sort of siege—firing from the windows upon the robbers, who fired in return. By an odd accident, one of them, while they strayed through the house in quest of plate and other portable articles, began to ascend the stair of a very narrow turret. When he had got to some height, his foot slipped, and to save himself in falling, caught hold of what was rather an ominous means of assistance—a rope, which hung conveniently for his purpose. It proving to be the bell-rope, the fellow's weight set the alarm-bell a-ringing, and startled the congregation, assembled in the Parish church. They instantly came to rescue the laird, and succeeded, it is said, in apprehending some of the gypsies, who were executed.

Dr Pennycuik, in his history of Tweeddale, gives the following account of a bloody skirmish which was fought between two clans of gypsies near his own house of Romanno:—

“Upon the 1st of October 1677, there happened at Romanno, on the very spot where now the dovecote is built, a memorable polymachy betwixt two clans of gypsies, the Fawes and the Shawes, who had come from a Haddingtoun fair, and were going to Harestanes to meet with two other clans of those rogues, the Baillies and the Browns, with a resolution to fight them; they fell out at Romanno among themselves, about dividing the spoil they had got at Haddingtoun, and fought it manfully; of the Fawes, were four brethren and a brother's son; of the Shawes, the father and three sons, with several women on both sides: Old Sandie Faw, a bold and proper fellow, with his wife, then with child, were both killed on the place, and his brother George very dangerously wounded. In Febru-

ary, 1678, old Robin Shaw the gipsie, with his three sons, were hanged at the Grass-mercat for the above-mentioned murder, committed at Romanno, and John Faw was hanged the Wednesday following for another murder." Dr Pennycuik built a dovecote upon the spot where this affray took place, which he adorned with the following inscription :—

A. D. 1683.

The field of Gipsie blood which here you see,
A shelter for the harmless dove shall be.

Although the gypsies of these counties are now nearly assimilated in their habits and occupations with the peasantry, yet, there are some of them who still practise the trades of making horn spoons, bosses &c., and traverse the country with these and other trifling articles for sale. At Gilmerton, a village a few miles from the metropolis, there lives one of them, well known by the name of Pate Bailley, who is married and follows the above mentioned occupation. Pate's principal means of livelihood are, however, his musical talents, which he exerts in fiddling at country weddings and *kirns*. He is reckoned by good judges to be among the finest players of Scottish tunes of which our country can boast. As he plays entirely by the *ear*, he may not probably distinguish himself by the trueness of his music, but the liveliness and touching tenderness of his strains, and the beauty of his endless variations, amply compensate his hearers for the want. He is such an *amateur* in his art, that if fairly set down to play with a sufficient supply of whisky before him, and surrounded by his admirers, he will scrape for days and nights together; and, indeed, he was once known to sit a whole week without intermission.

There was a gypsey, who about fifty years ago, frequented the county of Peebles, and was well known to its inhabitants by the name of Will Rivens the *tinkler*. He exercised the trades of tinker and horner, in which occupation he gained a great celebrity. He is described as having been a strong, stout, athletic and hand-

some man, not less than six feet high,—possessed of an honest disposition, a sagacious deportment, and a great good nature, which rendered him at all times a welcome guest in the farmer's ha'. Notwithstanding these amiable traits in his character, he was not without the gypsey propensities of his ancestors. He used often to lament the declension of hospitality in his day, compared with the olden time, "when his forbears," as he used forcibly to express it, "had siccan scowth and rowth in the country." Among the many innovations which had made such annoying inroads on the assumed privileges of the gypsies, was the establishment of numerous turnpikes in every direction. Against these he cherished such an aversion that he seldom let an opportunity escape of evading payment: Witness the following ludicrous incident:—

Once happening in the course of his peregrinations to be travelling from Peebles to Traquair, on the southern bank of the Tweed, he was arrested in his progress by a Turnpike, from which, owing to the enclosed state of the surrounding country, there was no prospect of evasion, except by fording the river, which he was loath to do. So, leaving his ass, he went forward to reconnoitre if the coast was clear, that he might embrace the opportunity of slipping past unperceived; but as his evil genius would have it, the toll-keeper, as unremitting in his duty as Cerberus, was at his post. Will seeing it was now a desperate case, courageously marched up and enquired if he demanded any toll for "back burdens," being answered in the negative, he immediately returned, and to the unparalleled amazement of the poor man, lifted his *cuddy* on his back—and with the utmost composure carried it fairly through the gate.

Will had been a soldier in his youth, and according to his own account had undergone various hardships by "flood and field." He died of a good old age at Selkirk, in rather abject circumstances. His son Rob,

who was not so respectable a character as his father, being at Jedderfield, a farm near Peebles, and a great resort of all the "*randie, gangrel bodies*" in Tweeddale, the gudewife enquired if his father had had an easy death. "He did not," replied he, "loup and spang like mony ane, for *de'il rive't was on him but bare kett!*"

Will had a brother, also named Rob, who for sheep-stealing or some such crime, was confined for a long period in Peebles old Tolbooth. It is said, that he subsisted principally during his incarceration in that dismal abode, by the donations of charitable passengers, put into a woman's pouch which he attached to a string from the window; a method of relief still resorted to in some places of Scotland by poor prisoners.

FIFE GYPSIES.

The Lochgellie Band—Curious Anecdotes of Charlie Graham—
His conduct at the gallows—Battle betwixt Hugh Graham
and John Young, &c.

THE most remarkable gypsies belonging to this county, at one time, were those who were so well known over all the north of Scotland by the name of the "Lochgellie Band." This notorious band consisted of four or five families, of the surnames of Graham, Brown, and Robison. Old Charlie Graham, was about thirty years ago, considered as their chief; but when the question was put to one of them, he said they were "a' chiefs when drunk, but Charlie was the auldest man." However, it was generally understood that the Grahams were the principal family, and transacted the *public business* of the horde. Old Charlie was an uncommon stout, fine-looking fellow, and was banished the kingdom for his many crimes. It is related, that on one occasion, when he appeared in Court, the

Judge, in a surly manner, demanded what had brought him there ; " the auld thing again, my lord, but nae proof," answered Charlie.

After Charlie had been forced into exile, his son, who was well known by the name of young Charlie Graham, succeeded him in the office of Chief to the band. Of this notorious character many singular anecdotes are told :—

He once, unobserved, in a grass field converted a young colt into a gelding. He allowed the animal to remain in the same field in possession of the owner, till its wounds were completely healed, and then stole it. He was immediately detected ; but the owner of the horse swore to a stallion, whereas Charlie's was a gelding, by which stratagem he got clear off. The man was amazed when he found his colt had been castrated, but when, where, or by whom done, he was ignorant. He sold the same gelding to a third person, again stole it, and at last replaced the beast in the park of the original proprietor. He seemed to take great delight in stealing in this ingenious manner, trying how dexterously he could carry off the property of the astonished natives. He sometimes stole from wealthy individuals, and gave the booty to the indigent, although not gypsies ; and so accustomed were the people in some places to his bloodless robberies, that some only put spurs to their horses, calling out as they passed him, " Aha, Charlie lad, ye've nuss'd your mark the night."

Notwithstanding the address with which he in general executed his depredations, and the sagacity he used in eluding punishment, Charlie at last was brought to the gallows. When he was apprehended, a number of persons assembled to look at him as an object of wonder, it being considered almost impossible to take him. His feelings becoming irritated at their curiosity, he called out in great bitterness to the officers, " Let me free, and gi'e me a stick three feet lang, I'll clear the knowe o' them." His dog discovered to the messengers the

place of his concealment. His feet and hands were so small, and handsome in proportion to the other parts of his athletic body, that neither irons nor handcuffs could be kept on his ancles and wrists, without injuring his person, the gyves and manacles always slipping over his joints. He had a prepossessing countenance, an elegant figure, much generosity of heart, and was, notwithstanding of his tricks, an extraordinary favourite with the public ; but "habit and repute a thief" brought down the scale of justice against this unfortunate gypsey.

In the morning of the day on which he was to suffer, he sent a message to one of the magistrates of Perth, requesting a razor to take off his beard, at the same time in a calm and cool manner, desiring the person to tell the magistrate, "that unless his beard was shaven he could neither appear before God nor man." This extraordinary expression warrants the opinion that, at this moment of his life, he imagined he would appear in his mortal frame before the great judge of the universe ; and these dreadful words further authorize us to think, that he believed God Almighty was a being composed of flesh and blood like an ordinary earthly judge. A short while before he was taken out to the gallows, he was observed very pensive and thoughtful, leaning upon a seat. He started up all at once, and exclaimed, in a mournful tone of voice, "Oh ! can ony o' ye read, sirs ! will some o' ye read a psalm to me ? " at the same time regretting much that he had not been taught to read. The fifty-first psalm was accordingly read to him by a gentleman present, which soothed his feelings exceedingly, and gave him much ease and comfort of mind. When he ascended the platform he was so greatly agitated that his knees were knocking one against another ; but just before he was cast off, his inveterate gypsey feelings returned upon him with redoubled violence. He kicked from his feet both his shoes in sight of the spectators, and it was understood by all present, that this strange

preceeding was to set at naught some prophesy that he would die with his shoes on.

A number of his band attended his execution, and when his body was returned to them, they all kissed it with great affection, and held the usual late-wake over it. His sweet-heart, or gypsey wife, of the name of Wilson, his own cousin, put his corpse into hot lime, then buried them, and sat on his grave *in a state of intoxication*, till his body was rendered unfit for the use of the medical gentlemen, it being reported that he was to be taken out of his grave for the purpose of dissection.

Hugh Graham, brother to Charlie, was, with a small knife, in Aberdeenshire stabbed by his own cousin, John Young. These two powerful gypsies never fell in with one another but a wrestling commenced. Young generally came off victorious, but Graham, although worsted, would neither quit Young nor acknowledge his inferiority of strength. Young frequently desired Graham to keep out of his way, as his obstinate disposition and temper would prove fatal to one of them some time or other. They however again met, when a desperate struggle ensued: Graham was the aggressor;—he drew his knife to stab Young, but he wrested it out of his hand, and laid his opponent dead at his feet by stabbing him in the upper part of the stomach, close to the breast, a place at which the gypsies appear generally to strike in their quarrels. In this battle the female gypsies, in their usual manner, took a conspicuous part on either side. Young was one of seven sons, and although he was about five feet ten inches high, his mother called him “the dwarf o’ a’ my bairns.” He was condemned, and hanged at Aberdeen for the murder.

Peter Young, brother to John, was also hanged at Aberdeen, after he had broken a number of prisons in which he was confined. He is spoken of as a singular man; and such was his generosity, that he always ex-

erted himself to the utmost to set his fellow prisoners at liberty if possible, although they happened not to be in the same apartment with him in the prison. When any one asked old John Young where his sons were, his reply was, "They're a' hanged."

FIFE GYPSIES CONTINUED.

Remarkable Traits of the character of Charlie Stuart, a gypsy chief—his strange manner of dancing, &c.—Geordie Drummond and his concubines—his singular method of exciting charity—his death.

THE above mentioned Grahams were all descended, by the female side, from old Charlie Stewart, a gypsy chief. He was a stout good-looking man, with a fair complexion; and lived to a long age. He used to affirm wherever he went that he was descended from the royal Stuarts of Scotland; and those who recollect the many curious anecdotes tradition has handed down, relating to the intercourse the *gaberlunzie* man had with the gypsies, may not probably deem Charlie's claim of royalty groundless. In support of this pretension, he, in the year 1774, at a wedding in the parish of Corstorphine, actually wore a cocked hat, decorated with a beautiful plume of white feathers, in imitation of the white cockade of Prince Charles Stuart. He was also dressed at this wedding in a short coat, philibeg and Highland purse, with tartan hose. He sometimes wore a piece of brass as a star on his left breast, with a cudgel in his hand. This ridiculous dress corresponds exactly with the taste and ideas of a gypsy. There were at this wedding five or six gypsy females in Stewart's train. He did not allow males to accompany him on these particular occasions. At some distance from the people at the wedding, but within hearing of the music, these females formed themselves into a ring, with Charlie in its centre. Here,

in the middle of the circle, he capered and danced in the most antic and ludicrous manner, sweeping his cudgel around his body in all directions, dancing at the same time with much grace and agility. He sometimes danced round the outside of the ring, putting the females to rights when they happened to go wrong. The females courtied and danced to them in his capers. Every one of the sweeps with the stick was intelligible to these women. It was by the different cuts, sweeps, and twists of the club, that the whole of the turns and figures of the dance were regulated. One twirl dismissed the females, another cut recalled them, a third sweep ordered them all to sit down squat on the ground, and another twist again called them up in an instant to the dance. In short, Stewart distinctly spoke to his female dancers by means of his stick, commanding them to do whatever he pleased in these operations, without opening his mouth to one of them.

As Charlie was once crossing the Forth, chained to his son-in-law Wilson, both in charge of messengers, he, with considerable shame in his countenance, observed a man whose father kept an inn in which he had frequently, with his merry companions, regaled himself with a bottle of ale. Stewart called this man close to him, took five shillings from his pocket, and gave him them with these words, "Hae, Davie, there are five shillings to ye, drink my health man, I'll laugh at them a'." He did laugh at them all, for nothing could be proven against him, and he was accordingly set at liberty, it being "the auld thing again, but nae proof."

Geordie Drummond was another strange character among the Fife gypsies. He resembled Stewart, in regard to his manner of dancing, except that his gestures were on some occasions extremely lascivious. In these dances he was generally attended with his whole seraglio of females. These were held as such objects of terror by the inhabitants of Fife, that the moment

they entered the door, salt was thrown into the fire, to set at defiance the *witchcraft*, of which they believed these gypsies were possessed. One female, called *Dancing Tibby*, was in particular an object of considerable apprehension and suspicion.

Towards the latter part of his life he subsisted principally on charity—the method he took to excite it is singular :

On a traveller coming towards him, he had an invvariable custom of immediately advancing with antic gestures several yards a-head of his *concubines*, twirling his pike-staff with uncommon dexterity. He would also go through a kind of sword exercise over the head of the astonished traveller, who commonly stood arrested and motionless by these eccentric salutations. Geordie would then shoulder his staff, and with a humble, though apparently an uncouth manner, supplicate “a bawbee for poor Geordie.” His merry fascinating behaviour, and robust manly appearance, with his clouted drab great coat and goat-skin wallet on his back, which contained his rough implements for compressing horns, of which he made spoons, together with his very ancient cocked hat, surmounting dishevelled and silvery locks, seldom failed to excite charity.

This remarkable *tinkler*, when provoked, always expressed his contempt by spitting bitterly, like an Arab when insulted. He was supposed to be fully ninety years of age when he died; and notwithstanding this assumed merry fascinating manner, he was at bottom a shrewd, designing, cunning, surly gypsy, and frequently beat his wives unmercifully. He had travelled over part of the Continent while a soldier in the army; and was in several engagements. Amongst others, he had fought in the battle of La Val. Having from his youth been impressed with an idea that he would die in the same house in which he was born, he no sooner fell sick, when at some distance from it, than he hired a cart or a chaise, and drove with haste

to his favourite spot. To this house he was allowed admittance, where he closed his earthly career in about forty-eight hours after his arrival.

FIFE GYPSIES CONTINUED.

Shocking murder of Charlie Brown—Lizzie Brown loses her nose in a scuffle—Humorous Anecdote of Sandie Brown—his escape from the Messengers—his re-apprehension—his Execution—Will Brown—Remarkable Anecdote of his attempt to escape while under sentence of death, by setting fire to the Prison.

CHARLIE BROWN, one of the principal members of the Lochgellie band, was killed in a desperate fight at Raploch, near Stirling. A number of the gypsy boys, belonging to several gangs in the south, obtained a considerable quantity of plunder at a Perth fair, and had, in the division of the spoil, some how or other imposed upon the Lochgellie gypsies and their associates. The before mentioned Charlie Graham, and this Charlie Brown, went south in pussuit of these young depredators, for the purpose of compelling them to give up their ill-gotten booty to those to whom, by the gypsy regulations, it of right belonged. After an arduous chase, the boys were overtaken near Stirling, when a furious battle immediately commenced. Both parties were armed with bludgeons. After having fought a considerable time with equal success on both sides, Graham, from some unknown cause fled and left his near relation, Brown, alone, to contend with the youths in the best way he could. The boys now began to press hard upon Brown, and became the assailants in their turn. He defended himself long and manfully with his bludgeon, displaying much art in the use of his weapon, in warding off the lighter strokes of the boys, which came pouring in upon him like hail from all quarters. At length however, he was forced

to give way, although very few of the blows reached his person. On taking a step backwards, retreating with his front towards his assailants, his foot struck an old feal dyke, when he fell with his back to the ground. The enraged boys, like tigers, now sprang in upon him; and, without shewing the least mercy, forthwith despatched him upon the spot, by literally beating out his brains with their bludgeons.

Brown's coat was brought home to Lochgellie by some of his friends, with its collar and shoulders besmeared all over with blood and brains, with large quantities of the hair of his head sticking amongst the gore. It was preserved for some time in this shocking condition by his wife, and exhibited as a proof that her husband had not fled, as well as to rouse the clan to future vengeance.

Lizzie Brown, sister to Charlie, is said to have been a woman of a masculine disposition, and perfectly Amazonian in her conduct. There is an anecdote related of this virago, of which we have been at considerable pains in procuring a genuine edition, and which will fully display Lizzie's *tinkler mettle*: She once quarrelled with a different clan for some trivial offence, and the feud being taken up by her whole tribe, time and place was appointed for a general contest. They met somewhere in the shire of Mearns, where the two hostile tribes immediately set to. In the encounter they fought with Highland dirks, exhibiting all the fury and tumult of a conflict of hostile tribes of wild Bedouin Arabs of the desert. Lizzie achieved prodigies of valour, and is said to have killed several of the enemy with her own hand, but in the heat of the scuffle, her nose (which none of the shortest,) was cut off by the sweep of a dirk: upon finding her loss, she put her hand to the wound, which was streaming with blood, and as if little had befallen her, called out to those who were nearest her, "but in the middle of the mean time, where is my nose?" However, it was only for an in-

stant that she paused in her sanguinary employment, she fell on with redoubled vigour, and after a most dreadful conflict her clan gained a decisive victory. Poor Lizzie's tall figure was ever after conspicuous among her tribe, owing to the want of that ornamental part of her face.

Among all the daring and remarkable gypsies we have attempted to describe, there are few exhibit the *sinkler* propensities in so lively a manner as the notorious Sandie Brown, a relation of Charlie and Lizzie's. The following humorous anecdote is related of him :—

Being, on one occasion, in want of butcher meat for his tribe, and recollecting that he had observed, grazing in a field in the county of Linlithgow, a bullock which had at one period, by some accident lost about three fourths of its tail, he purchased from a tanner the tail of a skin of the same colour of this bullock, and, in an ingenious manner, made it fast to the remaining part of the tail of the living animal, by sewing them together. Disguised in this manner he drove off his booty ; but as he was shipping the beast at Queensferry, in his way north, a servant, who had been despatched in quest of the depredator, overtook him as he was stepping into the boat. An altercation immediately commenced—the servant said he could swear to the ox in his possession, were it not for its long tail ; and was accordingly proceeding to examine it narrowly, to satisfy himself in this particular, when the ready-witted gypsy, ever fertile in expedients to extricate himself from difficulty, took his knife out of his pocket, and, in view of all present, cut the false tail from the animal, taking in part of the real tail along with it, which drew blood instantly. He threw this false tail into the sea, and, with some warmth, called out to his pursuer, “ Swear to the ox now, and be damned t'ye.” The poor servant, quite confounded, said not another word on the subject ; and, being thus imposed upon by this bold stroke of Brown, he returned home to his

master, and the unconsonable *tinkler* prosecuted his journey with his prize !

Sandie was not always so fortunate in his foraging excursions : Being once pursued and apprehended near Dumblane, it was the intention of the messengers to carry him to Perth, but they were under the necessity of lodging him in the nearest prison for the night. Brown was no sooner in custody than he began to meditate his escape. He requested it as a favour, that they would sit up all night with him in a public house instead of a prison, promising them as much meat and drink for their indulgence and trouble as they should desire. His request was granted, and four or five officers were accordingly placed in and about the room in which he was confined, as a guard over his person, being aware of the desperate character they had to deal with. He took care to ply them well with the bottle ; and, early next morning before setting out, he desired one of the officers to put up the window a little to cool their apartment, as it was then very warm weather, being in the middle of summer. After having walked several times across the room, the gypsy, all at once, threw himself out at the open window, which was a considerable height from the ground. The hue and cry was instantly at his heels and as some of the officers were gaining ground upon him in his flight, he boldly faced about upon them, drew forth from below his coat a dagger which he brandished in the air, and threatened instant death to the first who should approach him. He was at this time suffered to make his escape, as none had the courage to advance upon him.

He was, however, at a subsequent period, taken in a wood in Rannoch, being surprised and overpowered by a party of Highlanders, raised for the purpose of apprehending himself and dispersing his band, who lay in the wood in which he was taken. He thought to evade their vigilance and pursuit by *clapping* close to

the ground like a wild beast. Upon his being siezed, a furious scuffle ensued ; and, during the violent tossing and struggling which took place while they were securing this sturdy wanderer, he, with his teeth, took hold of the bare thigh of one of the Highlanders, beneath his kilt, and bit it most cruelly.

Sandie was conveyed to Edinburgh, and on the scaffold expiated the many crimes he had from time to time committed on the public. His brother-in-law, of the name of Wilson, was hanged along with him on the same day, being also guilty of a number of crimes. While these unhappy men were shivering in the winds of Heaven in the convulsive throes of death, Martha, the mother of the former, and mother-in-law to the latter, was apprehended on the spot, in the act of stealing a pair of double sheets, which in all probability were intended for the winding sheets of her unfortunate sons who were just suffering in her presence.

Will Brown, brother to Sandie, was also a gypsey of the most reckless and desperate conduct. For many years he succeeded in setting at defiance the myrmidons of the law, but at last was run down by a party of military and messengers near Dundee, from whence he was carried to Perth, where he was tried, condemned and hanged, to atone for the numerous crimes of which he was guilty. He was a man of great personal strength, and after he was hand-cuffed, regretting having allowed himself to be so easily taken, he in wrath drove the messengers before him with his feet as if they had been mere children. He was conveyed to Perth by water, in consequence of it having been reported, that the gypsies of Fife, with the Grahams and Ogilvies at their head, were in motion to rescue him from the clutches of the officers of the law.

While he was in that apartment in the prison called the Cage, or rather the condemned cell, he, by a stratagem, freed himself from his heavy irons, and broke his manacles to pieces. By some unknown means, he set fire to the damp straw on which he lay, within his

cell, with a design, it was supposed, to make his escape in the confusion which might take place in consequence of the prison being on fire. Surprised at the house being in flames, and suspecting that Brown had been the cause of it, and that he was free from his chains, ramping like a lion within his den, no person in the hurry could be found who had resolution enough to venture into him, till a brawny broad-shouldered sergeant of the 42d regiment courageously volunteered his services. However, before he would face the determined tinkler, he requested authority from the magistrate to defend himself with his broad sword, should he be attacked; and in case the prisoner became desperate, to cut him down. This permission being obtained, he drew his sword, and with the assistance of the jailor's daughter, unbarred the door, till he came to the cage, where the fire was kindled, and from whence the prison was filled with clouds of smoke. The sergeant, as he advanced to the door, with a loud voice asked, "who is there?" "The devil," vociferated the gypsey through fire and smoke. "I am also a devil, and of the Black Watch," thundered back the intrepid Highlander, the Black Watch being the ancient name of his gallant regiment. This resolute reply of the soldier was like death to the artful tinkler—he knew his man—it daunted him completely; and after some threats from the sergeant, he quietly allowed himself to be again loaded with irons, and thoroughly secured in his cell, from whence he did not stir till the day of his execution.



FIFE GYPSIES CONCLUDED.

Sketches and Anecdotes of Tam Gordon and his Band of
"Gillie-wheesels."

WE will conclude our Anecdotes of the Fife gypsies with a sketch of the renowned Tam Gordon, a notorious character who about fifty years ago frequented

most of the fairs of this county, along with his band of young gypsies called the "*gillie-wheelers*," or the lads who take the purses. He often rode upon a sheltie himself, and was dressed in a handsome suit, not at all to be known for a gypsey, except by those who were acquainted with him. Tam's gillies were all young lads, from about twelve to thirty years of age. To avoid observation, they generally crossed the Forth in small parties of twos and threes, as well as in single individuals. Very few persons, however, knew from whence any of these stragglers came; as it is one of their principal secrets to tell no person from whence they come, or with whom they are connected. They were in general well dressed; some of them wore *green* coats, and, like their captain, not to be known for gypsies. Individuals among them pretended to deal a little in horses. They all had cudgels in their hands; and, had they been searched, a sharp pen-knife, of the keenest metal, would have been found in the pocket of each man. These knives were employed in cutting out pocket-books and purses of the people in the fairs, when they could not manage the business by slight of hand. With these knives they also appear to have fought in close combat. All these vagrants were regularly trained to theft and robbery from their infancy, and exercised in the art of thieving under the most rigid discipline. They had various ways in making themselves expert thieves, and frequently practised by picking the pockets of one another. Sometimes a pair of breeches were made fast to the end of a string, suspended from a high part of the tent, kiln, or out-house, in which they happened to be encamped. The children were set to work to try if they could, by slight of hand, abstract money from the pockets of the breeches, hanging in this position, without moving them. It is said, that the Lochgellie horde used bells in this nefarious discipline, in the same way as we are informed the sharpers teach themselves to pick pockets in London.

The children who were most expert in abstracting the cash in this manner, were rewarded with presents and applause; while on the other hand, those who were awkward, and committed blunders by ringing the bell, or moving the breeches, were severely chastised by the superintendent of the gypsey school.

Every one of these gypsies put up at a certain public-house in North Queensferry, at that time well known in the neighbourhood for its good cheer, being much frequented by most classes of society. In this house, in the morning after a fair in Dunfermline, *when their business* was all over, and themselves not alarmed by detection or other *scaring* incidents, no fewer than *fourteen* individuals of these daring gypsey depredators have frequently been seen sitting at their breakfast, with Captain Gordon at their head, acknowledged as their commander. The landlord considered them the best customers he ever had, as they ate and drank of the best in the house, and paid him most handsomely. They were perfectly inoffensive, and remarkably civil. They troubled or stole from none of the persons about the inn, nor those who lodged in the house while they were within doors, or in the immediate neighbourhood; indeed, any thing in the premises could have been trusted with these gypsey gillies. In this house, at these meetings, they sometimes conversed in the gypsey language, of which the domestics about the inn understood not one word, except the slang expression of Captain Grose,—“milling the fob.”

About sixty years since, one of these gillies stole a black colt in the east of Fife, and carried it direct to a fair in Perth, where he exchanged it for a white horse, with money to boot, belonging to a Highlander dressed in a *green kilt*. The Highlander, however, had not long put his fine colt into a stable, when word was brought to him that it was gone. Suspecting the gypsey of the theft, and having received positive information of the fact, the sturdy Gael, in great wrath,

pursued him like a staunch hound on the warm foot of reynard, till he overtook him at a house on the north side of Kinross. The thief was taking some refreshment, when the Highlandman, in a storm of broken English burst into the apartment upon him. The *polished* gypsey instantly sprang to his feet, threw his arms about the foaming Celt, *embraced* and hugged him in the eastern manner, overpowering him with expressions of joy at seeing him again. This subtle and cunning behaviour quite exasperated the fiery mountaineer. Now almost suffocated with wrath, he shook the gypsey from his person with contempt and disdain, exclaiming "pheugh! cot tann her kisses; where pe ta cowl?"—The Celt was not to be imposed upon by deceitful embraces, nor mollified in his resentment by forced entreaties. He had messengers at his back, and the gypsey's feet were laid fast in Cupar prison for his audacity.

It is related that Tam Gordon was very dexterous at the art of the cudgel, so much so, that being once detected picking pockets at a fair in Dunfermline, he set his back to the old Abbey wall, and defended himself against all who attempted to sieze him. Forming with rapidity the different guards, and striking with vigour, he swept his bludgeon around the front of his body with great violence, drawing as it were a semi-circle, and all that came within its reach went to the ground. One stout weaver in particular made a bold effort to break in upon him—Tam laid his arm in pieces for his temerity. He at last, like a deer, sprang through an immense crowd, cleaving the mob with his person, brandishing his cudgel in his front, and in his flight crossed the Forth at Queensferry for the south.

THE END.

RONALD C. HODGES PUBLICATIONS

THE GYPSIES
OF
THE BORDER

by

R. MURRAY, HAWICK

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